



## *Talent Education Suzuki School*

TO: Appropriations Committee/ Conservation and Development  
FROM: Rebecca Christopherson, CEO  
Talent Education Suzuki School, 112 Main Street, Norwalk, CT 06851

Subject: The Importance of Arts Funding

My name is Rebecca Christopherson. I am the founder of the Norwalk Arts Commission and still serve on the commission. I am also the CEO of the Talent Education Suzuki School here in Norwalk and a member of the Board of Directors of the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, as well as a member of its' first violin section.

It has never been harder to fund the arts and culture. Charitable giving at the corporate, foundation and individual levels has been diverted to medical and environmental causes. I recently went through 180 files of corporations and foundations that once supported the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra. All but twelve have either ceased to exist or have re-aligned their giving priorities to exclude the arts. Although other counties in Connecticut have strong foundations that are devoted to the support of the arts, Fairfield County has no such resource. We depend on the state grants to fund our arts and cultural organizations.

There is no doubt as to the social capital, community cohesion, economic benefit and individual benefits a strong presence of the arts brings to society. Time and time again, studies have demonstrated an increase in academic performance and cognitive functioning in students who have access to arts education. We have been told by the corporate community that the future work force needs to be able to be creative and solve problems - two skills the arts develop through active participation in artistic expression.

Economically, the arts attract visitors and increase tourism. The arts attract residents and businesses, which is good news for Norwalk's redevelopers who will be trying to rent office space and sell living space as they deliver their promised projects. The arts attract investments as they provide community stability and a reason to stay in town for

recreational activities. The arts are an indirect multiplier in a local economy and an important economic driver. “*Arts & Economic Prosperity IV*, published in 2012, provides compelling new evidence that the nonprofit arts and culture are a significant industry in the State of Connecticut—one that generates \$653 million in total economic activity. This spending—\$455.5 million by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and an additional \$197.5 million in event related spending by their audiences—supports 18,314 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$462.5 million in household income to local residents, and delivers \$59.1 million in local and state government revenue. This economic impact study sends a strong signal that when we support the arts, we not only enhance our quality of life, but we also invest in the State of Connecticut’s economic well-being.”

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the arts increase our sense of collective identity and collaborative connectivity. The arts build community identity and pride, and lead to community involvement. They promote cultural diversity and understanding and reduce neighborhood crime and delinquency. I ask the state of Connecticut to support a strong arts and cultural community in its 2013 budget by restoring or increasing its budget amount to support arts, culture and tourism.